

Paris : desultory notes on fashion

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Textiles suisses [Édition française]**

Band (Jahr): - **(1952)**

Heft 3

PDF erstellt am: **17.07.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-792524>

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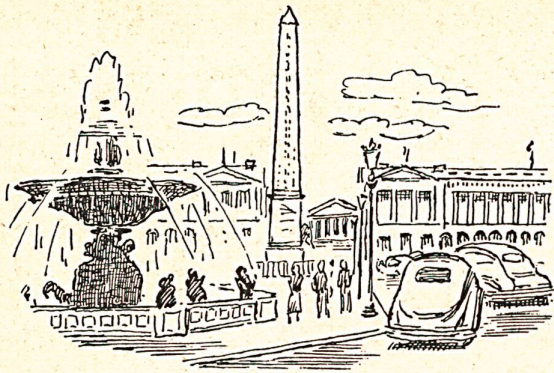
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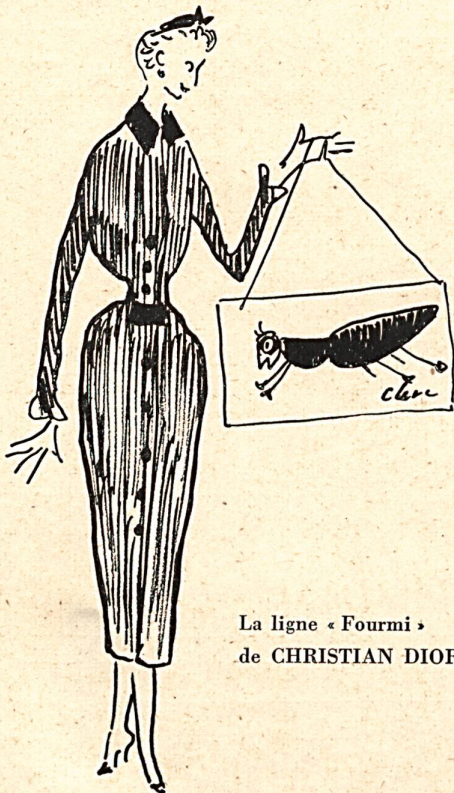


Desultory Notes on Fashion

There, another new Couture Festival is over! One more. In spite of wars, evolutions and revolutions, couturiers are faithful to the July and January rendez-vous. And this since nearly a hundred years. In fact, the centenary of the first presentation of Collections on living mannequins should be celebrated in four years.

At that time, the ancestor of *Worth* started the idea which at first attracted the ladies of the Parisian aristocracy, then the ladies of foreign courts, then the demimondaines, then the wives of the upper-middle class, then all the women of Europe, then the women of the world over. The first view of a collection is still, after a century, considered as one of the best shows to which one can be invited. And to walk up — on the first day — the stairs at Dior's when one is not a reporter, is considered by many women as a great achievement. Certain personalities are invited in several show-rooms. This year the three leading ladies were Mrs. *Ridgway*, Senhora *Vargas*, wife of the President of Brazil and *Ginger Rogers*. Besides, some couturiers do not only content

themselves to retain these stars of first prominence in their show-rooms: they organize magnificent fêtes in



La ligne « Fourmi »
de CHRISTIAN DIOR



« Il va falloir en
découdre... », le style
de HUBERT
DE GIVENCHY

their honour, of course not so striking as those that *Paul Poiret* gave in his Butard pavilion, where champagne flowed freely from a fountain, or at l'Oasis where all the records of splendour were beaten. But keeping in mind the difficult times, these receptions are still very good.

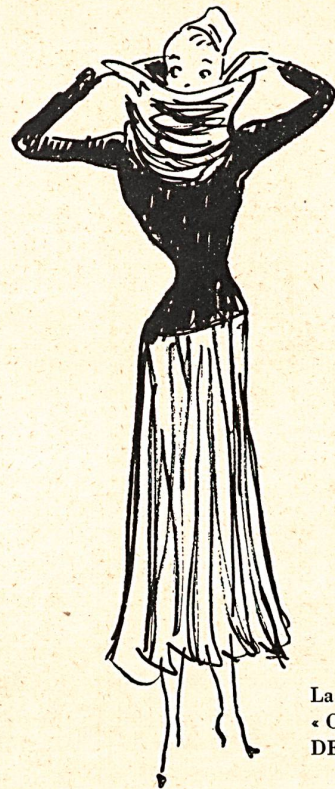
Spot-lights, flowers, feathers, jewels, furs, oven-like heat, iced drinks, applauses, mannequins parades between rows of chairs, legs you do not know where to place, cloud of blue smoke, the bridal gown that ends the show, the rush of guests towards the couturier (or the couturière) who is being kissed, congratulated, highly praised, it is always the same sight, the same atmosphere. Of



La ligne
« En souplesse »
de
JACQUES FATH



La ligne
« Cigale » de
SCHIAPARELLI



La ligne
« Ciboire » de
DESSE

course there is some exaggeration, but if after this, the couturier has a tendency to consider himself as a semi-god, this is not quite his own fault, he is incited to it. Besides, when we think of the network of production and trade activity of which he orchestrates the development and harmony, when he remembers that he is the promoter of textile industry under all its forms and provides work to dyers, dressers, pleaters, embroiderers,

button, flower and feather manufacturers, leather-tanners and I surely forget the others — and that his creations give employment to hundreds of thousands of workers and open new markets to firms of all nationalities, we can set aside the exaggerated part and only retain the interest of this unique propaganda.

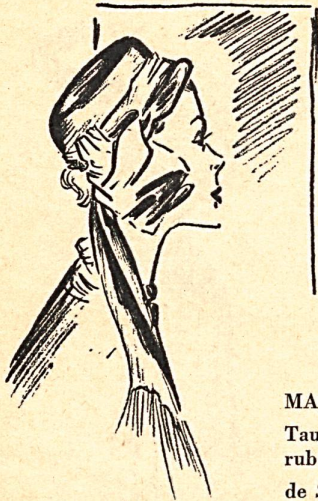
Upon the whole, the couturier does not matter so long as dress-making lives, that it renews itself and that new designers constantly rise out from the mass. Some of the greatest have disappeared since the war, and dress-making goes on. Chanel and Mainbocher are mere remembrance, Jeanne Lanvin is dead, Molyneux, Lelong, Piguet have stopped their activity, but Dior, Balmain, Givenchy have shot up like an arrow. Fath, hardly known in 1939, belongs to the glorious areopagus. And while I write, new designers are at work and will soon reveal themselves.

We cannot compare the talents of a Poiret, of a Jeanne Lanvin, of a Chanel, of a Vionnet, of an Augusta Bernard with that of the new generation. It is different, it translates the desires and affections of our day, it has taken up the torch that will be handed over in its turn, so that Paris Dressmaking may live gloriously.



La ligne
« Sirène » de
CARVEN

This said, it would do well to speak of the new Collections. The main subject of comments, this season, is on the cut of the models. Should a dress continue to be made according to the school of which Dior and Griffe are the champions, in relying upon the figure, and in



MAUD & NANO
 Taupé castor garni d'un
 ruban de satin noir
 de Seiler & Cie S. A., Bâle

reinforcing the line by artifices — like a building resting over a framework, whatever its facings are — or to keep away from the figure, of which only certain points of supports are preserved and to leave suppleness and softness, as proposed by Fath, Maggy Rouff, Madeleine de Rauch or Lucile Manguin ?

If you wish to know my modest opinion, this is of no importance at all. These are advertising topics. The last word remains with the customer who will decide, when the suggestions of the couturiers have had a two or three months run from now, on an average style of dress which corresponds to the general desire. The same applies to length; 11 ins. from the ground is the decree of Dessès, 13, 5 ins. says Fath. Actually, skirts will no doubt be slightly longer this winter than they were last spring, but without too marked a transition such as happened with new-look.

Fabrics develop. Long haired wools of the past seasons have lengthened their fleece, which is adorned with matching or contrasting coloured yarns. Thick bouclettes, astrakan like, are in fashion. And Tweeds come back



ROSE VALOIS
 Feutre gris
 garni d'un ruban épinglé
 lilas et citron
 de Seiler & Cie S. A., Bâle

again for coats, suits, jackets and morning two-pieces, whether used alone or brightened up with silk facings. Men's overcoats are with many couturiers rather long and rather loose.

We note every style of skirts, but it seems that most couturiers prefer them full. As regards evening and cocktail dresses, it is the most amazing display. All fancies have been tried and proposed, all the combinations that are permitted by the range of heavy or light fabrics, natural or artificial, satins and failles, tulles and laces. Loud applauses greeted printed fabrics imitating fur. Much liking was shown for the aerodynamic style of Dior, but also for the style of Balenciaga in which the woman has the right to resort to the advantages with which nature has provided her.

Reporters looked much at the mannequins because there is also the dispute over the best « cabin ». The most beautiful are they Givenchy's Bettina, Sophie, Caroline,



MAUD & NANO
 Bandeau à deux rubans
 de velours noir et saxe
 entrelacés
 de Seiler & Cie S. A., Bâle

Nelly and Capucine ? or Dessès' Sylvie, Christiane, Janine and Geneviève ? or Balmain's, even after the death of Praline ? or Fath's two new ones, Isabelle and Hélène ? This is a question of personal taste. And as the English say « no personal remarks ».

As I told you in the title, these are only desultory notes, yet so much could be described, so much explained after these eight days of excitement and the show of thousands of models that a synthesis is not possible. As Jeanne Lanvin used to say, a new collection is grain sown to all winds, few ears will mature, still there will be a harvest.

From the emancipated woman of Fath to the supersonic woman of Dior, from the siren-like woman of Carven, from the flower-like woman of Givenchy, from the woman of Paris of Balmain, the pretty women of Manguin, Maggy Rouff, Nina Ricci, Kogan, Jeanne Lafaurie, from the woman in black of Balenciaga, from the supple and elongated woman of Jean Dessès will arise the woman of the winter fashion 1953. And you may believe me, she will be very chic. X. X. X.